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EDITORIAL COMMENT

EVERY ballet lover in the country must have sent up a mental cheer as news came through of the great success Frederick Ashton had scored in New York with his ballet for the New York City Ballet. Arthur Todd writes a full account in this issue, together with a general review of the other works of the season. Readers will have a special interest in that the New York City Ballet will be our Covent Garden summer visitors this year and Ashton's *Illuminations* will be given on the opening night.

Incidentally, from now on Arthur Todd, one of New York's foremost dance critics, will be sending a regular coverage of all the principal ballet events.

A few months ago Frank Jackson, writing of Walter Gore's *Antonia*, made some wise comments regarding the difference which one's position in a theatre could make to one's reaction to a performance. This was very sharply brought home to me at a recent performance of *Scènes de Ballet*. My usual press seat is in the stalls circle, a little to one side but with a close and unobstructed view of nine-tenths of the stage—so long as the person next to me does not lean forward. (Why do people in the side seats always imagine that by leaning right out they obtain a better view? It does not make the smallest difference, except that it completely blots out the stage for their neighbour and causes a disagreeable atmosphere if the said neighbour ventures to protest. But this is a digression). On non-press nights I still like to sit either in the stalls circle or in the grand tier, which is the best place for those ballets which depend to a large extent for their effect on being able to see the shape of the groupings and the floor patterns. Such a ballet is *Scènes de Ballet* which, like *Les Sylphides*, should really never be seen except from above. However, on this occasion I either had to sit in the stalls or not get in at all, so stalls it was. Strictly speaking the stage was seventy-five per cent. invisible, and fifty per cent. invisible even by craning and bobbing from side to side while hoping that the fact that everyone else had to do the same would keep me from being too unpopular with the people behind. There was no question of gaining any idea of the shape of the general choreography: yet to my astonishment, seen at close quarters and in most irritating circumstances, I found myself enthralled by the performance and filled with wonder and admiration at the filigree intricacy of the dancing. Hitherto I have always felt that *Scènes de Ballet* was a great work by Ashton to which the company had never done anything like justice. Suddenly and for the first time I felt that they had got the hang of it at last. The delicate precision of the girls, the strong, well-marked movements of the men, were given their full value. I was astounded, therefore, when friends of mine sitting at a higher level told me that the performance was a disgrace—the girls were all over the place and, really, if they couldn't do better than that, they had better give up trying. Was I right, or were they? Perhaps we all were, and that when both the shape and the style of this work are equally well balanced we shall see a performance which will be a revelation. Meanwhile I feel I should like to congratulate the five men (who on this particular occasion were Somes, Chatfield, Macmillan, Melville and Vernon) for proving that when our male dancers are given something worthwhile to dance, they can and do rise to the occasion.

Now that the opera is on tour, the usual deterioration in the orchestra at Covent Garden has duly set in. Everyone in the audience complains—the comments at the Royal Command Performance were extremely pointed—but nothing seems to be done. Is it that the deputy system has such a stranglehold on the musical profession that there is no way of circumventing it?

Margot Fonteyn's triumph in America and Canada has, beyond any possible dispute, established her as the greatest international prima ballerina of the day. We all realise that other countries wish to see her and we are proud when she is 'borrowed' by such great opera houses as La Scala, Milan, where she is now appearing. We miss her very much at Covent Garden but console ourselves by reflecting that all the world envies us so treasured a national possession. But news of a coming tour in the English provinces arouses feelings of the utmost dismay. While Sadler's Wells are still appearing at Covent Garden, Fonteyn, supported by Robert Helpmann, Pamela May, June Brae, Harold Turner and a group of twelve student dancers are to appear on Mondays and Tuesdays in a number of provincial towns in programmes consisting of those typical mixed bits and pieces characteristic of this type of entertainment. It goes without saying that dancers and dances will be well presented and that

(*Continued on page* 6)

REMOTE AND INEFFECTUAL DON

By ALAN STOREY

AS John Grierson so wisely comments, in his reflections on the failure of Pabst's film, *Don Quixote*: "How except against images of isolation is Quixote conceivable? The romantic lunatic as a hero might be a great subject of drama and not of a lunatic asylum. If sympathy is to be got for him, or heroism or tragedy added to the tatterdemalion grandeur of his hopes, it is only against other-world horizons that he can properly be figured." It is precisely the absence of other-world horizons which makes Miss de Valois's new ballet, *Don Quixote*, so ineffectual, so apathetically reminiscent of a schoolboy's paraphrase of the classics. If we borrow or translate from works of genius we must add some justifying quality of our own; a personal vision which, by deliberate selection and concentration on detail disturbs the customary order of light and shade and conjures the whole into a strange and startling significance. The drama of the enchanted wanderer in Cervantes' novel evolves from the constant juxtaposition of two worlds; the world of apparent reality—of sun-cracked plains, decaying inns, women of the town, corrupt clergy, uxorious peasants and stable-smelly wenches; and the world of transcendent reality aspired to not only by Quixote but also by such Spanish mystics as Teresa and John of the Cross. Cervantes' genius lies in his ability to watch these opposed worlds dispassionately, but with profound sympathy, through the eyes of their protagonists, Sancho and his master. His narrative moves steadily yet with the certainty of an eclipse in which the solar and lunar bodies converge, fuse momentarily into oneness and then—and here the miracle occurs—continue, each bearing away some essential fragment of the other.

The translator, denied the bifocalism of the novelist,

MARGOT FONTEYN AND ROBERT HELPMANN IN THE CAVERN SCENE OF " DON QUIXOTE "

Action photograph by Louis Klementaski

"DON QUIXOTE" AS PERFORMED AT THE BOLSHOI THEATRE, MOSCOW

necessarily restricted in his choice of vision. He may either stand with Sancho and stare in wonder at an ordinary landscape transformed out of recognition by unpredictable flashes of chaotic idealism; or, as Pierson prefers, see the windmills, the sheep and the bestlings "as Quixote saw them, for giants and magicians and fearful affrays." Miss de Valois, unhappily, has attempted to split the vision and compromise between fairy tale and actuality, with the result that her ballet lacks the fantasy of the one and the realism of the other, having reduced its hero to the common level of his surroundings.

Her fundamental error has undoubtedly been to create *Don Quixote* according to the didactic formula of *The Rake's Progress* and *The Prospect Before Us*. It is a formula which, consisting as it does of a loosely related group of tableaux designed to depict the nature and consequences of moral decline or physical disaster, appears to derive equally from Hogarth, Wilkes and the tract societies. Indeed Miss de Valois may well be described as the inventor of the pamphlet ballet, a plastic equivalent of the broadsheet and the handbill whose theme is similarly presented in the simplest but most forceful terms of characterisation and expression. Thus the Rake and Mr. O'Reilly are caricatures who wear their motives unmistakably on their sleeves. They have no extension, no evolution in the theatrical dimension of character but, like carefully defined players in a toy theatre, move along their predestined grooves to a foregone conclusion; they are, that is to say, the victims of an ethical climate over which they have no control.

The drama of these earlier works is essentially cumulative; each episode, though complete in itself, making a definite contribution to the *dénouement*, the 'pay-off' or, as in *The Prospect Before Us*, the deliberate anti-climax. The drama of *Don Quixote*, however, is hardly conceivable in pamphlet terms since it arises not from the narrative itself but rather from an interplay between the dualities of Being and Idea which is both inconclusive and amoral. Denied the sources of her necessary stimuli, Miss de Valois's new ballet consequently possesses neither the aesthetic nor the imaginative unity of its predecessors, and certainly not their single-mindedness. The relationship between its scenes, like that of its characters, seems to be purely fortuitous, and the scenes themselves chosen merely to exhibit some of the more obvious examples of their choreographer's technical ingenuity. An ingenuity which is now, more

than ever, a mere substitute for a natural choreographic imagination. There are moments indeed when the ballet lapses into self parody; notably in the Inn scene which immediately recalls the orgy in *The Rake's Progress*—an orgy now emasculated and reduced by its comparative orderliness to a choirboys' outing or an insufficiently rehearsed gymkhana; again in the episode of the Windmills so incongruously suggestive of the Red King's death in *Checkmate*; and not least in the primitive device of parading figures before a drop-curtain to suggest continuity, which once amused us in *The Prospect Before Us*.

As for the characters, they are possibly the greatest failure of all. Miss de Valois gives the impression of having cast them as types without quite knowing what types they represent; their sleeves are bare, the hearts are gone. They are neither illumined by the comic spirit nor touched with humanity. It is impossible, for instance to visualise Mr. Helpmann's Don gently discoursing on arms and letters and inspiring awe, conviction and even love in the hearts of his listeners. It is equally impossible to detect the lofty, imaginative idealism which drove him to create and people a world of his own. He is no more than a crazy old fool; a fit companion in the last resort for the inmates of the Rake's asylum whither, one cannot but suspect, Miss de Valois instinctively consigns him. Mr. Grant's Sancho is equally without dimension. Gone is the materialistic, greasy peasant whose devotion to his master is due in equal parts to genuine feeling and a natural cupidity stimulated by an ambitious wife—a Falstaff and Pistol gloriously combined, and in his place appears a rollicking, inconsequential fellow in our native pantomime tradition. Miss Fonteyn's Aldonza Lorenzo—Dulcinea is a delightful creature; a mixture of heartless coquette and spiritual vamp, but hardly Cervantean. The original Aldonza Lorenzo was a slut and of the earth, earthy.

Space and its problems preclude further digression so, for that matter, does inclination. Sufficient to add that Mr. Burra's designs are ingenious but somewhat too reminiscent of illustrations commissioned by the Folio Society for a de luxe edition; and that Mr. Gerhard's score is rhythmic and colourful whenever the attention marks its existence. Incidentally, Mr. Beaumont, noting earlier choreographic versions of the novel, in his *Complete Book of Ballets*, comments: "All these productions, like that of Petipa, were mainly a vehicle for the introduction of Spanish dances." It was an old-fashioned practice, no doubt, and frivolously intended; but at least it prevented physical atrophy—a constant threat at Covent Garden these days.

Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet

The season ends on Saturday, May 20th, and the summer tour will begin on Monday, May 22nd, at the Arts Theatre, Cambridge. The following are the dates for the remainder of the tour:—

May 29th	New Theatre, Hull.
June 5th	Embassy Theatre, Peterborough.
June 12th	Theatre Royal, Norwich.
June 19th	Theatre Royal, Brighton.
June 26th	Pavilion, Bournemouth
July 3rd	Opera House, Cheltenham.
July 10th	Open Air Theatre, Finsbury Park.

The visit to Cheltenham is part of the Cheltenham Festival.

Svetlana Beriosova is joining the Company and will be with them on this tour.

Editorial Comment—continued from page 3

the tour will be an outstanding financial success. But—and this is the point—a great prima ballerina needs a setting so that she can shine at her best—such a setting as her own company affords. Fonteyn has eight or ten peak years before her, and prima ballerinas at the height of their powers do not scour the countryside, however luxuriously everything may be laid on for them. It has long been a sore point with ballet lovers outside London and its environs that they never have a chance of seeing Sadler's Wells Ballet which, as a largely state-subsidised organisation belongs to them as much as it does to Londoners. For them and for those thousands whose interest has been aroused since the newspaper reports of the American triumph, the opportunity of seeing Fonteyn will outweigh every other consideration, and to deny them that opportunity, knowing that Sadler's Wells are not leaving London until their annual holiday and subsequent second American visit, is to sound so dog-in-the-mangerish that I almost hesitate to express my feelings, strong as they are. But art is greater than any individual artist and one wonders what possible good it can do to Ballet, and what ultimate effect it will have on Fonteyn herself if it goes on for long.

P. W. M.

STOP PRESS — Owing to unforeseen printing delays it has been decided to date this issue April/May. The June number will appear on 20th May and so on.

The action photograph by Louis Klementaski on the cover shows Robert Helpmann as Don Quixote, Franklin White as the Innkeeper and Alexander Grant as Sancho Panza in "Don Quixote" at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden

NEW YORK CITY BALLET COMPANY

WORLD PREMIERE OF NEW WORKS BY FREDERICK ASHTON AND JEROME ROBBINS ARE MAJOR EVENTS OF MID-WINTER SEASON

By ARTHUR TODD

THE fledgeling New York City Ballet Company added considerable lustre and stature to its rapidly expanding reputation in its recent four week Mid-Winter Season (February 21st to March 19th) at the New York City Centre. Following rapidly after the announcement that they would visit Covent Garden this coming summer, the company inaugurated its most ambitious season in its two year history. At this writing, with five of the six new works already unveiled, it is safe to say that the world premières of Frederick Ashton's *Illuminations* and Jerome Robbins' *Age of Anxiety* were the major events of the season. Both works won first night ovations and were showered with critical bravos by the press.

The most distinguished audience of the season was on hand March 2nd for the Ashton première and it was in every sense an occasion. The British and American flags, the playing of the national anthems and the

FREDERICK ASHTON REHEARSING "ILLUMINATIONS" WITH NICHOLAS MAGALLANES AND TANAQUIL LE CLERCQ
Photograph by Walter E. Owen

"BOURREE FANTASQUE" WITH TANAQUIL LE CLERCQ AND JEROME ROBBINS

presence of British and American political dignitaries and society added to the warm and friendly hands-across-the-sea feeling. In addition, this performance was specially honoured since it was chosen as the inauguration of "International Theatre Month", a project sponsored by the American National Theatre and Academy.

In this approach to *Illuminations* Ashton has produced, as his programme notes read, "a sequence of danced pictures (*tableaux dansants*), or charades, in which images suggested by Rimbaud's poems and symbolic incidents from his violent life are interwoven on the musical pattern." Using the music composed by Benjamin Britten (in 1939) for tenor and strings as a basis, Ashton has translated the life and writings of Rimbaud into a ballet shimmering with poetic beauty and eloquence. It is remarkably well constructed and beautifully unified by Ashton's handling of the central figure of the poet. Moreover, there is just the proper air of fantastic unreality running throughout. Cecil Beaton's decor and costumes, sumptuous as they are, often detract from Ashton's subject and seem almost too glittering and chic for the theme and choreography.

Besides composing a work of stature and beauty, Ashton is also to be commended for employing the dancers at hand so knowingly and in shaping his choreography to fit their specific techniques. Cast in in the role of the poet, Nicholas Magallanes brings sensitivity and a broad range of emotion to his part. Though he still looks a bit too boyish for so tortured a poet, Magallanes will doubtless enrich this part as time goes by so that it may soon equal or surpass his remarkably fine "Orpheus." Ashton has provided Melissa Hayden, in the role of Profane Love, with one of the richest roles in her career—voluptuous, wild and sensuous—and she dances it to the hilt. Tanaquil Le Clercq, as the more shadowy Sacred Love, has considerably less to do. Britten's score is wonderfully adaptable to ballet, though it left some critics over here rather cold. It could be even stronger and less redundant at least for a ballet, with the verses and singer omitted entirely.

Though Ashton uses groups knowingly and well, his most moving episodes were those composed for the central figures and here his gifts for inventiveness shine the strongest. Ashton is also to be commended for producing a work that can be understood on its own merits and that does not require any particular familiarity with Rimbaud. *Illuminations*, though it has literary connotations is in no sense literal—it is a ballet in the purest sense. As a dance work, it is the most successful re-creation of a poet and his life to be seen in America since Martha Graham's *Letter to the World* which was freely based on the life and poetry of Emily Dickinson.

The other major work of the season, Jerome Robbins' *The Age of Anxiety*, like *Illuminations*, was of poetic inspiration. It is programmed as "inspired by

Leonard Bernstein's Symphony No. 2 and the W. H. Auden poem on which it is based. The ballet follows the sectional development of the poem and music and concerns the attempts of people to rid themselves of "anxiety." In this, his most serious and ambitious work to date, Robbins once more had the collaboration of the two ranking artists who worked with him on *Fancy Free*. Leonard Bernstein, who has provided a score that is strongly constructed and closely related to the thematic subject matter of the poem, writes music that is restless, tense and uneasy. Oliver Smith, who is also co-Administrative Director of Ballet Theatre with Lucia Chase, has designed back-drops of coldly bleak skyscraper towers that are eminently suitable in mood.

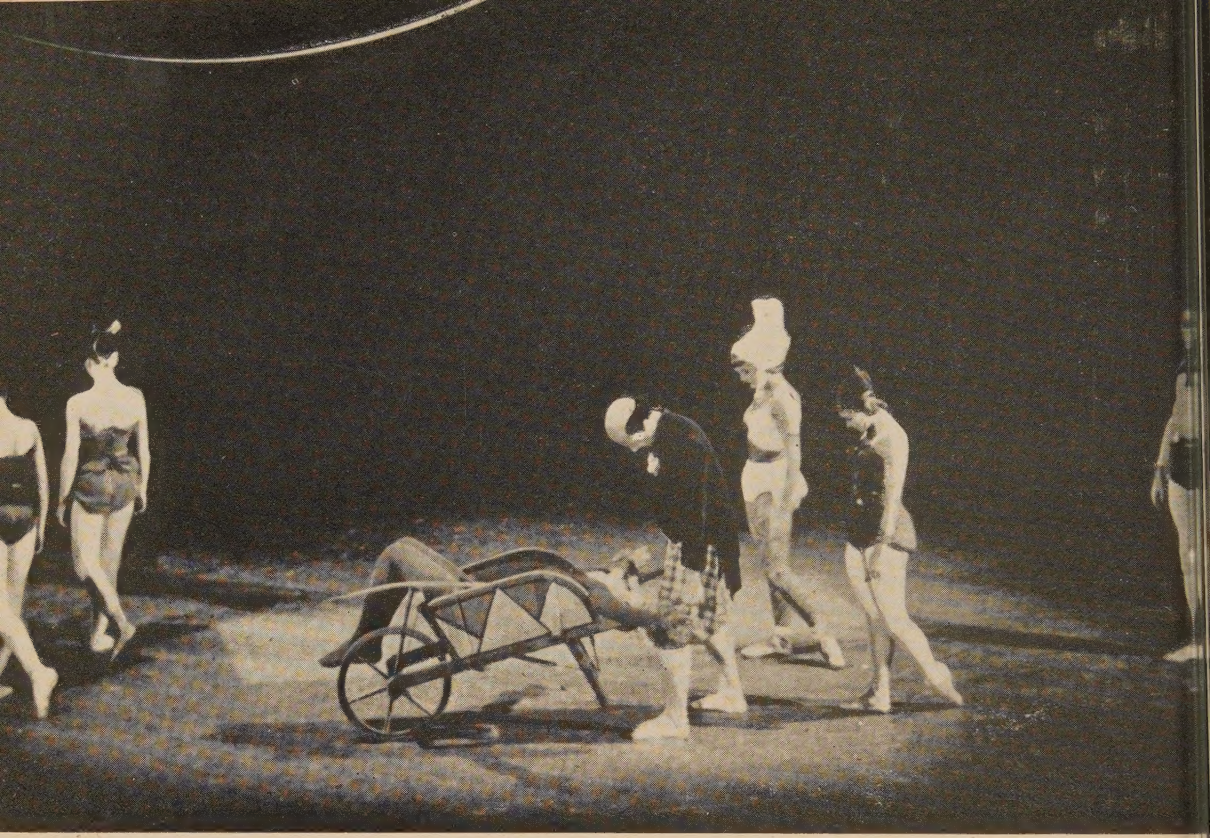
The four central figures in *The Age of Anxiety*, three men and a girl, are danced magnificently by Tanaquil Le Clercq, Herbert Bliss, Francisco Moncion and Jerome Robbins. In the Prologue these "four strangers meet and become acquainted." In the next scene, The Seven Ages, "they discuss the life of man from birth to death in seven variations." Then "they embark on a dream-journey to find happiness." Later, "they mourn for the figure of the All-Powerful Father who would have protected them from the vagaries of man and nature" and, in their frustration, "they attempt to become or appear carefree." At the conclusion of the ballet they appear to have found a faith of some sort, or at least the promise of one, and depart separately.

Besides dancing one of the main roles with searching intensity and conviction, Robbins has choreographed this ballet with skill and insight. In portraying the discussions, dream-journeys and mourning of the four main characters, he uses a huge *ensemble* of more than thirty dancers in particularly complex choreographic patterns. Produced so soon after his very distinguished *The Guests*, which, perhaps, had a more understandable message, this is probably Robbins' most profound work and it finds him at a new peak in his creative powers.

In addition to *The Age of Anxiety*, Jerome Robbins walked away with the principal critical honours for his portrayal of the main role in the revival of Balanchine's *The Prodigal Son*. Originally choreographed by Balanchine to Prokhofiev's music for the Diaghilev Ballet in 1929 in Paris, this work is historically interesting since it shows the artistic growth of Balanchine over the past two decades. Today this work seems "modernistic" rather than modern and its many dated sections almost outweigh the more inventive passages. Nevertheless, this revival won a great personal triumph for Robbins and he was hailed as "the first dramatic dancer of our ballet" by John Martin, the dean of American dance critics. This is doubly remarkable when one considers that Robbins overcame one of the most dreadful costumes extant in present-day ballet—a combination composed of something resembling a sheik's head-gear, a blue blouse and white tights—and together these elements reminded some of Charles Weidman's wonderful satire on Valentino in *Flickers*. The sets were likewise no help, being dusty, jumbled and colourless. The whole work cries out for the original Roualt settings. Even Maria Tallchief, though she was technically excellent as the siren, looked rather ridiculous in a costume resembling satin lastex with a flowing cape. The work still merits attention because it offers Robbins in one of the great performances of the day.

Of the two new Balanchine works for the current season, the major one, *Jones Beach*, had not yet premiered at this writing. A second, and minor work, *Pas de Deux Romantique*, to music by Carl Maria von Weber won favourable critical reviews despite a mixed audience reception. Apparently, the piece was composed as a witty comment on a classic *pas de deux*, though Balanchine has since denied this and though Janet Reed is reported to have claimed after her first performance that she didn't know that the work was meant to be humorous. At any rate, sections of the audience often broke into unrestrained laughter, especially when Herbert Bliss' ring-masterly series of walks around the stage with the ballerina seemed like a sly poke at the style of Anton Dolin. Alicia Markova, who was in the audience, didn't visibly seem to find the proceedings amusing though the costumes were—much clashing colour of cerise and purple, a blonde wig for Herbert Bliss, and an overly generous array of rhinestones on both costumes. Possibly the work was intended as an acid portrait of balletic extremes but since it fails to come across clearly as such it must be judged a failure, at least in my opinion. Moreover, it seems a pity to so waste the talents of two such fine dancers as Janet Reed and Herbert Bliss in this manner. If this continues, we may soon expect to see Balanchine burlesquing some of his own over-complicated and repetitious choreography.

The Duel, choreographed by William Dollar and the fifth new work of the season, was a radical departure from the truncated version presented by the Ballets de Paris in New York last fall as *Le Combat*. Dramatically, this work is considerably heightened by the addition of three medieval warriors who set the theme for the duel between Tancred and Clorinda. Moreover, the death scene, which seemed endless as performed by the Ballets de Paris, now seems much shorter. Considerable strength is added by choreographer William Dollar's dancing of the role of the



A SCENE FROM LEW CHRISTENSON'S BALLET " JINX." THIS WORK AND " BOURREE FANTASQUE " WERE REVIEWED IN THE FEBRUARY ISSUE

Christian knight while Melissa Hayden gives a technically superb account of herself in one of the most bravura roles in the company's repertoire.

Though there is a feeling in some quarters that the July visit of the New York City Ballet Company to Covent Garden is rather a thin return for the Sadler's Wells visit to America, the company has some definite and important attributes and now, finally, seems headed in the right direction. In the first place, the addition of the new Ashton ballet has considerably broadened the scope of the repertoire as has the presence of Robbins' two new works. This continued inclusion of such outside influences will not only be healthy for the dancers but it will also serve to remove the almost indelible stamp of Balanchine on most of the repertoire. This young company still has no *premier danseur* to equal Youskevitch nor a dramatic ballerina comparable to Nora Kaye but it does have in Maria Tallchief a classic ballerina of the first magnitude. The *corps de ballet*, however, is still quite uneven when compared to that of Ballet Theatre. Definitely on the credit side, however, is the youthful bouyancy of the whole company and they dance with vigour and a great belief in their own future. Possibly it is for this very reason that Frederick Ashton told interviewers that "I am continually amazed by the vitality of these young American dancers, I would imagine it was a combination of diet and climate which gives them the bounce and verve which I have found so noticeable. I think the New York City Ballet Company boasts a number of excellent young dancers and I imagine they will have quite a success when they appear on the European stages."

Ballet Rambert

On the next page is an article about this company's recent highly successful tour in Germany. On the 22nd May will appear in Paris at the Theatre Sarah Bernhardt for a two week's season. During this period Sally Gilmour will make her re-appearance with the company, dancing her famous role of Tulip in *Sailor's Return*.

On the first night of their Lyric, Hammershith, season which commences May 2nd, Walter Gore's ballet, *Winter Night*, which was first performed during the Australian tour will be presented. This is set to the Rachmaninoff 2nd Piano Concerto and has costumes by a young Australian artist, Kenneth Rowell. The leading dancers are Paula Hinton, Margaret Hill and Walter Gore.

BALLET RAMBERT IN GERMANY

By J. STUART BARKER

BALLET companies, like troubles, never come singly—to Germany at least. A little over a year ago, Roland Petits' Ballets de Paris were followed closely by the Sadler's Wells Ballet, and now the De Cuevas Grand Ballet de Monte Carlo has had the Ballet Rambert close on its heels, once more affording an interesting comparison of French and English dancing. By the time I first saw the Rambert company in Hamburg, Walter Gore had recovered from his foot injury and had rejoined it and *Dark Elegies* consequently had its German première. Well sung by Helmut Laue and conducted by Geoffrey Corbett, this work met with instant approval, for apart from its already familiar words and music, its deeply emotional theme is of the type designed to appeal most to the German mentality. Its style of dancing too is a partially familiar one, in its proximity to the Central European school. Paula Hinton, Margaret Hill, Barbara Grimes, Walter Gore, and David Paltenghi brought back a memory of the first performance, with Tudor himself, at the Duchess Theatre some sixteen years ago, and in no way suffered by comparison. *Jardin aux Lilas* was less liked, possibly due to a lack of appreciation of the choreography itself, a fact which also applied to *Gala Performance* and *Facade*, which although meeting with appreciation, did so, one suspected, for the wrong reasons, and had to be over-burlesqued to achieve their effect.

By comparison, what had Monte Carlo offered of a similar nature? The eternal *Les Sylphides*, with its decor a long way "after Corot," notable only for two excellent interpretations of the male role by Skibine, and Golovine. (As a result of Sadler's Wells visit, there is now to be seen in Dusseldorf, a sort of "psuedo-Sylphides" in a new Kunnecke operetta which has just had its world première—and very amusing I found it, though I had no one to share my amusement! Gauze wings and black velvet doublets just don't match Teutonic physique).

Act II of *Giselle* again was noteworthy only because of Hightower's technique. Marjorie Tallchief is too athletic for Myrtha, and the less said about Eglevsky's miming the better—likewise his nylon tights!

Act I had been well danced with Hightower proving that she is also an excellent mime but Cheselka is no Bathilde, and I have never seen such fidgety peasants. The courtiers were conspicuous by their complete absence. However, the Germans liked its story content, a fact which also made *Night Shadow* an immediate hit. What excellent theatre this ballet is, and how perfect the interpretations of Pagava and Skibine. Cheselka was a less effective coquette than Marjorie Tallchief, mainly because, like Beryl Grey, she has too pleasant a face, but the divertissement was uniformly well danced, especially by the Moors. Rambert's narrative ballets, *The Fufitive* and *Bar aux Folies-Bergère* were universally popular, the former for its topical theme, the latter for its unsophisticated humour, for the German's sense of humour (if indeed he has one at all) is essentially of a broad nature. Can it be that La Goulue's costume has faded with the years, or is it merely an example of distant recollections of Markova and Maude Lloyd lending too much enchantment? Whatever the case, Paula Hinton, its present wearer is a worthy successor, and Margaret Hill brings to the comedy of her work a touch as sure as she had previously brought to the tragedy of *Dark Elegies*. Both of Gore's light-hearted ballets, *Plaisance* and *Simple Symphony* found favour, the former being particularly well danced. Mary Munro and Cecil Bates deserve special mention for their crisp performances in both works—Let there be more marriages, if this is the result!

In similar realms of pure dancing, De Cuevas had offered *Concerto Barocco* and *Designs with Strings*, the two best rehearsed works in his repertoire.

Tallchief and Reznikoff were excellent in the former, though Tania Karina, as the second female subject, tended to be a shade behind the music, which is most irritating in a work of this nature. I cannot help feeling too, that this ballet would gain immeasurably by having its original setting and costumes restored—there has been too much of this "practice" stuff of late—an audience expects to see a complete ensemble, not a rehearsal. Finally the French found it necessary, as usual, to gild their gingerbread by slipping in the Volinine *Snowflakes pas de deux*, beautifully danced by Janine Charrat and Skibine, and the perennial *Black Swan pas de deux* impeccably executed by Hightower and Eglevsky. (As the Germans start to yell after even two *fouettés* the resulting chaos can be imagined!) What was the ultimate impression left by all the foregoing on this new European audience?

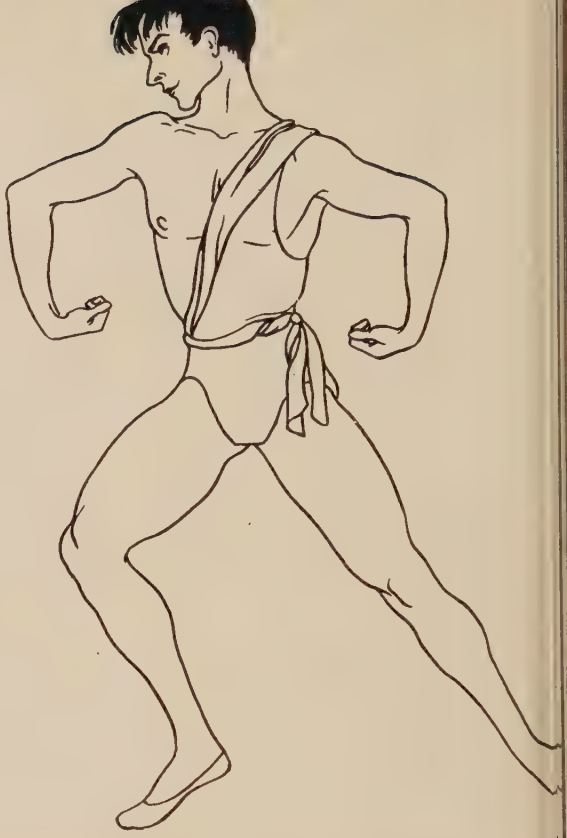
It was, I can say unhesitatingly, that works produced by English companies are "all of a piece", whereas those produced by the French are "all in pieces".

The Rambert team takes a hand in everything even, at present, to the point of being overworked. The De Cuevas outfit, by providing a little jam occasionally, merely increases disproportionately the dose of pills.

The Sadler's Wells Ballet is still a major topic of conversation in German artistic circles, which are by no means ill-informed of its activities. While looking at some Rambert photographs outside the Dusseldorf theatre the other day, a German girl alongside me explained correctly to her companion the relationship of this company to Sadler's Wells, which she added, has just put on *Don Quixote* with "die Fonteyn"—not bad for three days after the première, considering the paucity of reviews in the press!

This episode also leads me to wonder why the photographs exhibited outside theatres during tours cannot have a little more connection with programmes being presented. Gore and Hinton in *Antonia*, Gilpin and Wright in *Bluebird*, even Hugh Laing in *The Planets* have been plastered across the British Zone recently. If Mme. Rambert can take the trouble to make a delightful curtain speech in German to set the seal on her company's success, surely the British Council can take a little more care over the advance publicity.

Note.—Ballet Rambert who returned to England at the end of March and after a week at the Theatre Royal, Huddersfield are at the Winter Garden, Morecambe for a week from April 24th, will have a three weeks' London season at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, commencing May 2nd.



PETER REVITT'S "BALLET GUYED"
GEORGE SKIBINE IN "DES BICHES"

COVENT GARDEN EN FETE

by FRANKLIN WHITE

MARCH, so the verse runs, 'comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb.' This year, for the Sadler's Wells Ballet there was a little variation on that theme ; the lion and the unicorn of the Royal Coat of Arms hung over us on the first and ninth days of that month at two vastly different ceremonies.

At Covent Garden, the decorations at the Royal Opera House by Oliver Messel for the Command Performance in honour of the state visit of the President of the French Republic and Madame Auriol, had been in progress for some time : for the part of the week prior to the night of the preformance the Grand Tier had been out of use while the construction of the Royal Box and other seating arrangements were going on. Before the great day work had gone on all the previous night, and by lunch time there was still much to be completed. At that time I came on to the stage at a rather opportune moment—the stage was empty and the curtains up, giving an appearanc of great depth. Just then someone switched on th two powerful lamps which, from their position at th extreme ends of the amphitheatre, threw a mass c light on the half-finished decorations of the Roya Box. Framed by the proscenium arch, as it was from where I was standing, it was rather a wonderful sight with the large Royal Coat of Arms at a precariou angle in the process of being hung. Never have seen such activity as when I walked through the foyer passing yards of double tulips fixed in laurel leaves with a fresh yet rather overpowering scent, in readines to drape the staircases and mirrors. The foyer wa quite unrecognisable and even busier than a depart ment store. Behind festoons of leaves and blu canopies, men fixed the television and newsree cameras, others worked on the mass of lights and gol lanterns and chandeliers suspended from the roof o

gathered white nylon. I escaped an incoming procession of antique furniture and squeezed my way up the staircase, dodging people with stepladders, light cables and fixtures of all types. In the Crush Bar there was a general flurry of activity, even the floor was covered with people painting Royal Insignias. It did not seem possible that it was all going to be ready in so few hours' time.

At about seven in the evening I arrived back in the the vicinity of the floodlit Opera House. Already the streets were full of crowds ready to cheer everyone—even a man on a bicycle proceeding down Bow Street. Officials and press men swarmed around the carpeted and flag hung entrance to the foyer and a large television van nearby. The only indifferent people were a group of balloon sellers taking tea as they leant against the barred windows of the police court opposite before getting down to the business of making money out of the crowd. Floral Street was dark with policemen, it appeared to be some sort of assembly ground for them, giving the stage door an air of complete impregnability. I got successfully through this awe-inspiring gauntlet, but was brought up short by the presence of Joe, the stage-doorman, who carefully inspected my pass before finally allowing me through the doors of this guarded sanctuary. I once more passed through to the front of the house and found a completely transformed scene. Apart from last minute details, all signs of the morning's flurry had disappeared. In the green retiring room, red and gold liveried attendants unpacked hampers of champagne and other delicacies for the Royal party; concealed lights appeared in the flower-lined borders of the great staircase, and in the Royal Box silk tasselled programmes were lying in place on the gold chairs.

Back on the stage I found some of the cast of *Symphonic Variations* practising beneath the rostrums on which stood cameras with their lenses unobtrusively protruding through the red velvet tabs. From here the photographs of the Royal Box were taken. Apart from the cameras, preparations for the performance were calm and seemed very much as usual, until going behind the back cloth I noticed lying on some scenery a hunting cap and a long silver-moulded trumpet from which fell the embroidered state banner. Nearby, in their red and gold braided costumes were several trumpeters of the Household Cavalry. I was immediately questioned about the identity of the dancers practising and, to my surprise, found among them a keen follower of Ballet. Little time was now left, and with a call for beginners the trumpeters marched into position. In the wings, crowded with stage hands, dressers and dancers in various forms of make-up, excitement began to rise. At last came the hiss of the hydraulic mechanism which precedes the rise of the curtain and the roar of about two thousand members of the audience in conversation broke off simultaneously at the sight of the line of trumpeters backed by the red velvet tabs and flanked on either side by the half swept back curtains at the foot of which stood the silver-wigged flunkeys. Throughout the next fifteen minutes in the darkened wings excitement reached its highest pitch until between the mass of heads in front of me I saw the trumpets rise for yet another wait in which even the stretched arms of some of the trumpeters appeared to tremble, and then at last the fanfare which must have heralded the entrance of President and Madame Auriol with the Royal Party. The most complete picture of all this must have been set by one of the boys in the wings with a portable wireless. He and those near him would have been the only ones to know with any certainty what was going on a few yards away.

A slight re-arrangement in the third act of *The Sleeping Beauty* kept me standing on the stage after the Red Riding Hood *divertissement*. I was delighted at this opportunity of surreptitiously examining the audience, but reckoned without the elusive eyeholes in my wolf's mask. All the same I had a general impression of the most glamorous night at the Royal Opera House since the war. White shirt fronts stood out with the red and blue ribbons of the different Orders, diamond tiaras flashed in the reflected light from the stage, and looming up from the semi-darkness, beefeaters with gleaming partisans gave the final touch of pageantry. Silhouetted by the lights of the birdcage wall brackets in the Royal Box, the French President, Madame Auriol and the Royal Family could just be identified.

There is always for me something thrilling when those massive curtains swing sideways and up, and the pink-shaded auditorium lights slowly come up for the last curtain call, but never have I seen such a sight from the stage as when all of us stood for the playing of the National Anthems and in every part of the flower decked house the colourful audience rose and faced the Royal Box. The curtain fell and it was all over. Usually after a performance little time is wasted by anyone: dancers speed towards their dressing rooms and the lights and scenery are struck and packed away practically before the calls are over (Heaven help anyone who gets in the way!) but that night there was a noticeable reluctance to leave the stage. Perhaps those who had been in other Command and Gala Performances might feel it less, but I think there is a glamour and excitement about such occasions which is a part of theatre life and dear to most of us.

The Oxford and Cambridge University Ballet Clubs' Gala Ball held at the Dorchester Hotel on March 1st in

aid of the Sadler's Wells Ballet Benevolent Fund, had a most enjoyable informal atmosphere in spite of the ponderous length of its title. No speech or appeal followed the excellent dinner, just a simple toast to the King, then the Cabaret, a raffle of programmes sold by some of the girls of the Company and drawn by Margot Fonteyn and Pamela May, followed by dancing to the music of the two current American hits, *Kiss Me Kate* and *South Pacific*, until two a.m., when, with Her Royal Highness Princess Margaret and Robert Helpmann dancing to the hectic strains of 'Twelfth Street Rag', a most delightful evening came to a close. The Princess, looking perfectly exquisite in a black crinoline gown spent a great deal of the evening on the dance floor, partnered on occasions by Michael Somes and Harold Turner. All around many members of the company could easily be picked out by their vocal efforts alone as they joined the orchestra in the (to this country) comparatively unknown songs from the two American shows.

Admittedly for John Cranko, Ray Powell and Alfred Rodrigues, who had arranged the dances for the Cabaret, squeezing in their rehearsals between their normal day's duties, the expectancy of this part of the entertainment may have left them with some not unnatural moments of worry, but if the results of their efforts were any judge, the dancers even out-stripped the spectators in having a good time.

Robert Helpmann as compère, with stories and head balancing tricks with a champagne bottle opened the Cabaret before announcing John Cranko's parody on his own *divertissement*, *Tritsch Tratsch*. This time he used another polka with two girls and one sailor. A Beguine and a Samba arranged by Ray Powell and danced by him with Gillian Lynne came next, followed by John Cranko's arrangement of Katchaturian's 'Sabre Dance' with Alexander Grant and David Blair. Stanley Holden and Jane Shore romped through a burlesque of the Miserere from *Il Trovatore* before Alfred Rodrigues' dances set in the Roaring Twenties. Anne Negus as a bobby-soxer and Kenneth Macmillan as a footballer kept most people in stitches, equally the two girls dancing the Charleston —April Olrich and Dorothea Zaymes with Gilbert Vernon, between which came a Blues danced by Anne Heaton and Henry Legerton. After the finale Margot Fonteyn appeared in a fantastic rigout of about the same period, with a hat from which protruded the most enormous feather, to dance the Tango from *Facade* with Robert Helpmann.

Most assuredly a good time was had by all.

"THE BRONZE HORSEMAN"

HOW A SOVIET BALLET IS MADE

PART II

By ELENA ROSLAVLEVA

CHOREOGRAPHICALLY Zakharov achieved some very good results in the Russian dances of the first act and the duet of Parasha and Eugene in the second. The latter is done not as a traditional *pas de deux* but as a *pas d'action* in which the movements are justified by the meaning of the dance. Eugene performs some jumps and *pirouettes* because he is in love and wants to express his joy. In most of the dances Zakharov used the classical dance idiom, but he used it for a different purpose and in a different way. In the last act the *corps de ballet*, wearing specially designed costumes with floating trailers, faces covered with the same material, are made to convey most artistically the impression of waves, carrying away from the mad Eugene his Parasha —the image of Parasha, whom he sees everywhere. This is a very impressive choreographic novelty, one of the most interesting from the point of pure choreography, since Zakharov has not introduced many new movements in this ballet. The vision scene in poor Parasha's little courtyard, desolate after the flood, is very touching, but when Parasha appears (as the sick imagination of Eugene sees her), one cannot help noticing several "quotations" from *Giselle*.

There are two "ballerina parts" in *The Bronze Horseman*—the Queen of the Ball (in the Prologue) and Parasha. They are perfectly contrasted roles. The Queen of the Ball performs a brilliant *pas de deux* with Peter's "arab" (Pushkin's historic ancestor), whose part is danced by a good male soloist. In Moscow the role of the Queen of the Ball was taken by Semeyonova or Golovkina; in Leningrad, where the ballet was originally produced, by Shelest.

The part of Parasha is not easy because very little is said about her not only in the "book" but by Pushkin himself. It is merely known that she was a simple and sweet girl of a humble origin. Zakharov set some graceful and lyrical dances for Parasha, based mostly on variations of the Russian dance.

It is very difficult for a ballerina to create the character of Parasha. However each of the dancers

who took the part presented her own interpretation. In Moscow the part is danced by Ulanova, Lepeshinskaya or Struchkova; in Leningrad by Dudinskaya, Vecheslova, Shelest and other young dancers.

In Moscow Struchkova was probably the one who succeeded most in interpreting the simple charm of Parasha. But she danced opposite Yermolayev—an unsurpassable Eugene. This ballet is in a way a male parallel of *Giselle* and it is natural that Eugene should be its central character and even overshadow the ballerina. From this point of view alone *The Bronze Horseman* is a welcome choreographic novelty, since there are practically no ballets where the male hero is the choreographic and dramatic centre. The role of Eugene shines as such, however, only in the hands of a perfect artist. Such is Yermolayev. When he dances the part of Eugene everything around him dims in the light of his artistic brilliance. He gives a touch of Dostoyevsky to his Eugene—but that is quite in the nature of the frustrated character he is impersonating. And he is not always sad and frustrated. When Yermolayev—Eugene dances his dance of young love in Parasha's little garden, he is classically technical and at the same time most Russian and most natural. When Parasha does her part of the dance he settles in a nonchalant pose on the garden table and watches her with a happy smile. When he wanders, mad, in the streets of Petersburg, pursued by a crowd of teasing boys, he is pathetic.

In Leningrad Konstantin Sergeyev created an unforgettable image of Eugene, more in a lyrical vein, but also dominating the ballet.

The only—but unfortunate—failure of the ballet is the character of Peter the Great in the prologue. The choreographer gave him a few static movements instead of expressive mime or dance-mime.

ROSARIO AND ANTONIO, MOST FAMOUS SPANISH DANCERS OF THE DAY, TELEVISED FROM ALEXANDRA PALACE ON MARCH 4TH. THEY WILL APPEAR, TOGETHER WITH MARIEMMA AND HER DANCERS, DURING THE THIRD WEEK OF THE EDINBURGH FESTIVAL.

DURING THE FIRST WEEK, COMMENCING AUGUST 21ST, BALLET THEATRE WILL MAKE ITS LONG AWAITED RE-APPEARANCE IN THE BRITISH ISLES. BALLETS PRESENTED WILL BE "THEME AND VARIATIONS" (BALANCHINE), "FALL RIVER LEGEND" (AGNES DE MILLE) AND "FANCY FREE." THE COMPANY WILL INCLUDE NORA KAYE, DIANA ADAMS, IGOR YOUSKEVITCH, HUGH LAING AND JOHN KRIZA. THE GRAND BALLET DE MONTE CARLO WILL APPEAR DURING THE SECOND WEEK WITH A REPERTOIRE WHICH WILL INCLUDE A REVIVAL OF "PETROUCHKA" WITH MASSINE. OTHER DANCERS WILL BE ROSELLA HIGHTOWER, JANINE CHARRAT, ANA ESMERALDA, MARJORIE TALLCHIEF, ETHERY PAGAVA, ANDRE EGLEVSKY AND GEORGE SKIBINE.

Action photograph by Duncan Melvin

The last scene of the ballet is also too static and amounts to a *tableau vivant* instead of a choreographic *finale*.

The motley crowd on the Senate Square in the scene where Eugene and Parasha have a rendezvous at the feet of the Bronze Horseman is beautifully done. The *balagani* or picturesque booths are seen in the distance (the Admiralty Square where they used to be displayed adjoins that of the Senate) and some of the performers, the travelling circus and the man with the puppet theatre and street vendors fill the square. Military music is sounded and a detail of hussars, preceded by dancing boys, marches across the square, admired by the parading young ladies and their governesses. A Columbine and Harlequin are presented by the owner of the wandering circus. He goes round with the hat as they dance.

One could easily trace in this scene the inheritance of Fokine. I have been frequently asked whether it is true that that "tradition of Imperial ballet remains unbroken in Soviet ballet" and whether in that case it has remained in the pre-Fokine era.

I believe that the account of how a Soviet ballet is made, given above, is an answer to the question. However, to make the matter quite clear, I would like to recall a few historical facts.

The Fokine reform was brought about by historical necessity. The need for a reform in ballet had been felt for a couple of decades before he actually carried it out. However great was Fokine's genius, his reform, like Noverre's, was prepared.

The reform in ballet was closely interwoven with the new realistic trends in the theatre and painting. These were started not in Petersburg, but in Moscow, which was more democratic, and less conventional than Imperial Petersburg. The creation of the Art Theatre in 1898 by Stanislavsky and Nemirovitch-Danchenko, the invitation by Mamontov of Korovine and Golovine as *décorateurs* for his private opera, and the first realistic Gorsky production of *Don Quixote* in 1900 with décor by Korovine and Golovine are closely connected. Gorsky was the first to treat the *corps de ballet* and the whole *ensemble* on the stage as members of a choreographic drama, according to the principles of Stanislavsky, expecting them to act and be natural. Instead of a frozen symmetrical *corps de ballet* he created a living crowd; instead of the traditional accidental attire, ballet acquired for the first time real scenic costumes.

When Fokine conceived his reform in 1904 and carried it out, partly in 1906, and more fully, by 1908, he, while being considerably under the influence of the then flourishing Russian "decadence" or *art nouveau*, never had the intention of breaking with the *dancing*

Photograph by Preben Engberg, Copenhagen

MARGOT LANDER, PRIMA BALLERINA ASSOLUTA OF THE ROYAL THEATRE, COPENHAGEN, WHO RETIRED IN FEBRUARY. SHE IS SEEN HERE AS ODETTE IN "SWAN LAKE," BUT HER RANGE INCLUDED THE WHOLE CLASSICAL REPERTOIRE AND MANY DANISH BALLETS. HER LOYALTY IN REMAINING IN HER OWN SMALL COUNTRY WHEN HER QUALITIES WOULD HAVE EARNED HER AN INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION GAINED HER THE LOVE AS WELL AS THE ADMIRATION OF THE WHOLE DANISH PEOPLE.

tradition of the Russian ballet, with its best achievements, particularly those of the nineteenth century, or with the classical school as the only system capable of producing the perfect instrument for the choreographer to work with. He merely wanted to break the routine of the Imperial ballet, which, in its worst aspects, wore corsets and diamonds, flirted and talked on the stage and had no interest in the subjects of ballets. But the best aspect of the Imperial ballet was the tradition of the Russian school—expressive dancing, inspired dancing, powerful dancing.

It would be utterly erroneous to think that Diaghilev took the Fokine reform away with him, or

that in consequence of Fokine's and Diaghilev's departure "Russian ballet remained outside of the Fokine reform." Once a reform has taken place, it cannot be stopped. Lineal choreography or flat groupings, devoid of sense, were abandoned for ever by Russian choreographers. But the historical truth is that Fokine created his little *chef d'oeuvres*, exported by Diaghilev to the triumph of Russian art as a whole, for a special audience. Some of them, such as *Nuits d'Egypte* were created "*pour épater la bourgeoisie.*" For domestic purposes Fokine toned down his productions of the period and never allowed himself bold interpolations of music and dances from other ballets such as were done for the Paris season in order to make the ballets as striking and exotic as possible because that was what was expected from them.

Outside of Russia whatever Diaghilev had in his repertoire was inherited and treated as the Gospel. But no creed should become a dogma. It should serve as guidance, but not as a yardstick.

It is also forgotten that Fokine broke with Diaghilev in 1912, not accidentally, but after *L'Après-midi d'un faune* for the reason that with it Diaghilev forsook the dancing traditions Fokine never intended to give up. After 1912 Diaghilev gradually lost his "little parliament" of invaluable collaborators and drifted eventually under the influence of *French* art, but not Russian.

The best of the Fokine reform, what he himself was never able to achieve, because he was deprived of the means, has been carried out in the Soviet ballet, an art aiming at deep significance.

What is new in Soviet ballet? Its method of realism, its function—that of reflecting true life—whether in historical or modern subjects, its preference of heroic, elevating themes, its treatment of a ballet as a fusion of all arts, directed towards an artistic whole.

The *corps de ballet* in Soviet ballet is an equal member of the company and the performance, expected to understand fully the meaning and aim of the ballet and of each individual part.

The technique of Soviet dancers is higher than that of the Imperial ballet because it belongs to not a few virtuoso dancers, but to a large group, and because it is based on a uniform method, worked out by the Soviet school of ballet headed by Vaganova and adopted by all ballet schools, while the technique of the Imperial schools, however good it was, depended on the individual demonstration of the *maitre*, and had no uniform pedagogical method.

These are but a few main features of Soviet ballet.

POOR LILIAN!

By JANET SINCLAIR

IT has nowadays become so much of a reflex action to dismiss every circumstance adversely affecting the Old Vic and Sadler's Wells Companies with a shrug of the shoulders, saying "Poor Lilian must be turning in her grave," that one accepts this unhappy flight of fancy and does not stop to consider the implications of everything that has happened since Miss Baylis died. When for a moment one does so, the conclusions reached are rather terrifying.

Lilian Baylis wanted and worked for a people's theatre. By that she meant a theatre—or two, or three—in a poorer part of London, built for and catering for the poorer sections of the community: she did not and never could have meant West End success. It is impossible to guess how she would have reacted to war-time conditions: but one can safely say that she would have reacted with fury and indignation to such Press references as "Sir . . . and *his* Old Vic Company, at present touring . . ." (my italics); to the drama company's continued association with the West End, to the Covent Garden Ballet's retaining the name "Sadler's Wells Ballet" without, according to Sir George Dyson's recent letter to *The Times*, repaying the theatre and organisation which made it to the extent of one penny piece: and one might hazard a guess that under her guidance Sadler's Wells would not in the five years following the end of the war have lost their entire reserves of capital to the extent of £75,000. That this must be to some extent due to extravagant expenditure on "production" is fairly easily deduced and when one remembers what was achieved before the war with an expenditure of not much above fourpence-halfpenny a time, one can only mourn the days when necessity mothered such fine invention. (It might be mentioned in passing that one slight service must be rendered to the budget by the almost total lack of expenditure on lighting in one or two recent productions; but even this has its disadvantages).

However, it is the ballet situation which appears the most grim. By rendering up the Sadler's Wells Ballet to the lions at the Royal Opera House, it has been given (with notable exceptions, of course) to the snobs and the loonies, the first distinguished by their ability to spend sixteen shillings on a ticket for a seat from which, as like as not, one-sixteenth of the stage is visible; the second distinguished by their toughness and their appetite for

staying out all night—for such is the pitch of lunacy to which we have come that without staying out all night it is impossible to obtain any but the poorest seat for anything but the odd matinee of *Giselle* with the wrong cast.

The Sadler's Wells Ballet, then, is not an entertainment to which the man in the street is invited or welcomed; indeed, he is hedged off with as many restrictions as possible; and in future we are faced with a rapid deterioration even from the present situation—if the company intends to spend one-third of every year earning dollars, most of us might as well give up trying to get in at all while they are in London, unless the management proposes to erect pre-fabs along the pavement and sell them in order of precedence to the highest bidder. Already with the queue ticket system in operation one has to queue to queue—my suggestion is surely the next step.

Many of the ballet audience become bored with this state of affairs and turn their attention to football, opera, the cinema, knitting, Danny Kaye or the second company at Sadler's Wells Theatre. What do they find at the last named? An organisation, according to Sir George's letter, which has openly abandoned all attempts to become an independent ballet company and resigned itself to being something like a good pupil show, with no higher aim than maintaining a steady migration into the back row of the *corps de ballet* at Covent Garden. Nobody is going to convince me that Miss Baylis would have had this, let alone liked it.

What can be done? With regard to the situation at Sadler's Wells, the Governors should put down their feet with as much firmness as they can muster and say to Covent Garden: "No compensation, no more dancers, and no more dancers anyway until they have appeared with us for at least five years." The Ballet Company should say to the Governors: "Two performances a week, please, as before." This would give the Sadler's Wells audience what Lilian Baylis intended them to have —a good ballet, as well as good opera and good Shakespeare.

With regard to the incredible mêlée on Covent Garden pavement now taking place at intervals of roughly four weeks, the following expedient is highly recommended. Revert immediately to the unbooked gallery with an incorruptible "stool-man" to organise the queue: and sell half the 5s. amphitheatre and all the 3s 6d. amphitheatre tickets on the day of performance. Enthusiasm for all-night queueing would rapidly evaporate and one would return to normal, with the cheaper parts of the house always full at curtain rise—yet seats obtainable by joining the queue as the house opened—except on very special occasions, as happens today with the very popular opera performances at the Wells.

The really dangerous thing about the situation at Covent Garden today is that the fashionable people filling the downstairs part of the house will suddenly decide that something else is still more fashionable, and desert: and the martyrs nearer the sky will finally get out of patience with the situation and decide that their beds are preferable to the hard pavement and go to the pictures instead. By that time all the old hands who kept the company going for years before its fashionable West End success will have been irrevocably discouraged and the theatre will suddenly be quite empty. However much, in momentary exasperation, one may feel that this is a consummation most devoutly to be wished, when calmness returns one realises that for such a thing to happen would be disastrous. Why, the very thought of it would make Lilian turn—but that's where we came in.

NINA VYROUBOVA IN "GISELLE" AT THE PARIS OPERA

By JEAN LAURENT

The role of Giselle has appealed to all the great ballerinas, even those who were not particularly suited to interpret it. After Carlotti Grisi, who, with Lucien Petipa, created the Ballet at the Opéra on June 28th, 1841, the stars most celebrated in the part were Andreanova (1842), Lucile Grahn (1843), Fanny Elssler (1843), Taglioni (1844), Zambelli (1901), Pavlova (1903), Karsavina (1910), Spessivtseva (1924), and Yvette Chauviré (1944).

By conjuring up these illustrious shades on the stage of the Opéra, Nina Vyroubova was taking a risk and inviting comparisons not easy to sustain. Time casts a spell over everything, memory not least. It is possible to compete with even the most living dancer, but against a phantom the game seems lost in advance. Nina Vyroubova's most formidable rival was not Yvette Chauviré, who danced Giselle at the Opéra only yesterday; nor Toumanova, who interprets Giselle in the present production at the Opéra alternately with Darsonval and Vyroubova; but Spessivtseva, who has remained that ideal romantic heroine, borrowed by Théophile Gautier from a

NINA VYROUBOVA IN " GISELLE " AT THE PARIS OPERA.
ON APRIL 3RD NINA VYROUBOVA TELEVISED FROM ALEXANDRA PALACE WITH SERGE LIFAR AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE PARIS OPERA, DANCING IN " LA MORT DU CYGNE." THIS WAS LIFAR'S FIRST APPEARANCE IN ENGLISH TELEVISION AND IN ADDITION TO " LA MORT DU CYGNE " HE ALSO APPEARED IN " ENTRE DEUX RONDS " WITH JOSETTE CLAVIER.

Photograph by Roger Wood

Germanic legend, or, to be precise, from a page of the poet Heinrich Heine.

Giselle, which had disappeared from the Opéra repertory for fifty-six years, from 1868 to 1924, was reintroduced by the great Russian ballerina Olga Spessivtseva, who was shown Marius Petipa's choreographic version by Sergueeff. Her partners were Aretine, then Ricaux, and lastly Serge Lifar in 1932. Spessivtseva's interpretation will always remain a pinnacle ; Serge Lifar said of it that "ever since, Giselle, like a sleeping beauty, has been awaiting the unique star which will restore her to life and splendour." This unique star for whom we have all been waiting may indeed by Nina Vyroubova, who has made, in the fullest sense of the word, a "creation" of the most danced part in the world.

In particular, Vyroubova astonished and delighted us in Act I. To give life to a simple little peasant-girl, Lycette Darsonval is too mature and passionate, and Toumanova too tragic. Toumanova, with her exaggerated transports, seems mad from her first appearance, with her look of a hunted animal. Nina Vyroubova, on the other hand, emerges modestly, almost timidly, from her little cottage, and darts forward, with relatively simple steps 'ballonné, coupé, jeté, coupé, etc.) in search of her lover. Her face retains a child-like naivety, and reflects a simplicity and freshness of spirit which strangely touch the heart.

This fragile grace hides a very precise and certain technique. Vyroubova scored an apparently effortless success in the First Act variations—the famous "diagonal", a virtuoso passage which is often set for examinations at the Opéra. In the second act, I am less enthusiastic about the style of her *arabesques*, but, in spite of the very noisy boards of the Opéra stage, her dancing was inaudible—she dropped to earth soundlessly. The Queen of the Wilis, on the other hand, vulgarly interpreted by Mlle. Bourgeois,

appeared to be dancing in clogs. At each *grand jeté*, the noise of her shoes drowns the playing of the orchestra. In the Bacchanal of the Wilis, when they rush off in search of Albert, the great chandelier of the Opéra begins to tremble, and the audience are much more alarmed by this Ride of the Valkyries than Hilarion himself!

It is easy to understand why all dancers cherish an ambition to dance Giselle. The part calls for an almost complete metamorphosis between the first and second acts. The lively and joyous little peasant-girl, beloved by the prince, Albert-Loys, must become in the second act a dancing light, a chiffon scarf blown on the breeze. We had already admired Vyroubova in *La Sylphide*, the romantic ballet which undoubtedly inspired the creators of *Giselle*, and her success in Act II was more or less assured. Light and intangible, bodiless as a phantom, she becomes quite naturally a "dancing soul". Giselle's flight is interpreted in *arabesques*, *grands jetés* and *sissonnes* which realise the choreographic *leitmotiv* of the Wilis, the girls who have died before their wedding-day, the unhappy souls who cannot rest quiet in the grave, whose sleep is troubled by the passion for dancing which they could not satisfy in life.

In the famous Mad Scene, Vyroubova moved us by very simple means, without any wild gesticulations, outflung arms or wandering gaze. With a few unfinished gestures, confused and deformed dance steps heavily sketched while she pulls the petals from an imaginary flower—Giselle's madness transports us into the realms of the Unconscious solely by dramatic dancing.

More than a hundred years after its creation, *Giselle*, which is the climax and symbol of the Romantic Ballet, continues to exercise an unflagging appeal. In this part, Nina Vyroubova can take up any challenge in the international field.

NEWS FROM PARIS

The Direction of the Opéra, faithful to tradition, seems to wish to disturb as little as possible the degrees of the hierarchy. Following the last examination, the youthful Liane Daydée passed from *petit sujet* to the rank of *première danseuse* and had her official debut on March 1st in a ballet by Serge Lifar entitled *Passion* to music by César Franck. The ballet takes place in front of a simple black curtain, and the argument is the struggle between the spirits of good and evil for the possession of the soul of a young girl and, this time, evil triumphs. The partners of Liane Daydée were Roland Duflos and Jean-Bernard Lemoine, respectively nineteen and twenty-one years old, and now *grands sujets*. There is nothing original in the choreography of *Passion*. It is a set of typical Lifar steps reproduced to the point of monotony. Thus presented, Liane Daydée was unable to make much impression on the public which remained cool.

On the other hand, on the same evening, Josette Clavier, *grand sujet*, (to whom it is said has recently been given the role in *Entre deux Rondes* formerly danced by Solange Schwarz), scored a real success. She is sixteen years of age: her presence, authority and command of the stage are remarkable. We shall soon have an opportunity of seeing Liane Daydée again in *Le Spectre de la Rose*.

Public and press alike have rejoiced over the return to the Opéra for several months of Tamara Toumanova. Whilst awaiting the important creation of *Phèdre*, a ballet by Jean Cocteau, Serge Lifar and Georges Auric who is writing the music, Toumanova will shortly create, with Lifar and Daydée, a new ballet at the Opéra called *L'Inconnue* of which at the moment there are no details. It is believed that the Cocteau ballet will have its première not in Paris but in Florence during the May celebrations.

FERDINAND REYNA.

MR. ARCHER-SHEE MEETS SOME DANCERS IN PRIVATE

SOME years ago, looking around the station bookstall at Victoria, Manchester, (I was on the way to Bolton to see the Ballets Jooss), I found a book called *My Contemporaries* 1830-1870 by William Archer-Shee. On opening it, I found that it was a journal of a gentleman of leisure who seemed to have spent his time in the haunts of fashionable society of those years. In the list of contents for the years 1834-1836 there was the note "Manchester Musical Festival—Death of Malibran." That was sufficient to make me buy the book. Once in the train I found even more interesting items.

"July 1841—I went yesterday to a fête at Brompton given by the impresario of Her Majesty's Theatre to the principal Opera people, singers and dancers, and generally to the friends and patrons of the theatre. It was partly *champétre*, and partly urban in character. It was amusing, but at the same time it was *désenchantant*. Lablache, Rubini, and Tambourini look pretty much *en particulier* as they do on the stage, and, moreover, one is so habituated to seeing them dawdling down Regent Street together, that their appearance in a *salon* does

not show them in any new light. But the dancers present so very different an aspect, *en bourgeois*, to what they do when dressed—or undressed—for performance, that it is hardly possible to recognise them.

"I recollect the first time I went to one of those reunions (for they are annual at the close of the Season, like the Ministerial fish-dinner) I could hardly bring myself to believe that the pale and stout young lady with a waist anything but *svelte*, a foot which O'Gorman Mahon would describe as having a 'mighty good hould of the floor,' and whose movements in the dance are anything but active and graceful, was the same that, in a 'pair of stays and a vallance,' had delighted me, the evening before, by her suppleness and agility.

"I found myself dancing in a Quadrille *vis-à-vis* to Cerito, and next to Plunkett. The former was dressed very dowdily, and wore a large, lace shawl, which she did not take off when dancing, and her appearance was far from being light, airy, or

CHALON'S LITHOGRAPH OF THE FAMOUS "PAS DE QUATRE," A DESCRIPTION OF WHICH BY A CONTEMPORARY IS QUOTED IN THIS ARTICLE

elegant. I am told that in a private drawing-room, when *décolletée*, she is a splendid creature, but she is more fully developed than is, at her age becoming. Taglioni has no such defect, or rather, I should say, is in the other extreme.

"Seen from the stalls, or even behind the scenes, these charming creatures lose whatever heaviness or want of refinement they may appear to have, when seen in juxtaposition with the more refined members of the sex generally. On the stage the 'get-up' and other accessories give them every advantage, while they have not the disadvantage of comparison.

"After perambulating the gardens, we adjourned to the house, where, in a hot and ill-lighted room, dancing commenced and I daresay continued to a late hour ; but of that I know nothing, having left early.

"During my stay there was no singing, which disappointed me much. A singer in private has no difficulties or *convenances* obstructing the efficient display of her professional powers, while a *danseuse* has the *incommoda* of long petticoats to hamper her movements, and has moreover the consciousness that what, before the lights, excites the admiration and secures the applause of the public, would in a friend's drawing-room or on his lawn, be looked on as the grossest indency, calling for the intervention of the police."

This seems an anomaly—*mais que voulez vous* ? 1845 was the year of the famous *Pas de Quatre*. In June of that year, after several pages in which the Maynooth Grant is discussed, Archer-Shee writes of what was undoubtedly the theatrical sensation of the Season.

"Who was it advertised for a new excitement ? I am like the old lady who, being asked after her husband, replied that he was in the 'arms of Beelzebub,'—but corrected herself, saying, 'I mean "Abraham's bosom," but I never can recollect people's names.' "

I can never recollect people's names, but, whoever the individual was who lived a 'long time ago' had lived in the present day, he would have exclaimed 'Eureka'. Talk of excitement—gracious goodness—let those who need it go to the Haymarket, and see the *Pas de Quatre*.

"Truly, Lumley is a great man, and the best caterer 'out' for the public that has ever leased Her Majesty's Theatre, *manger comme quatre*, we have all heard often enough, but *danser comme quatre*, that is a new idea. Such a *tableau*, such a *tour de force*, never was before presented to the admiring eyes of the frequenters of the Opera House. Taglioni, Cerito, Carlotta Grisi, and Lucille Grahn. What a four-in-hand. How on earth Lumley got such a 'team' to work together is a mystery. We all know the jealousies among professionals, and how one performer

will not cede the *pas* to another. In this instance, they have done it literally as well as metaphorically. Of course Taglioni is the first, she has no compeer, and even the three rivals, I am told, give in to her so far as to permit her to be the centre of the display. But how the other three, among whom there is a certain equality, and a known rivalry, have been induced to pull together, I am at a loss to imagine. It is certainly the finest Terpsichorean treat ever provided. So equally are the claims of Cerito, Carlotta Grisi, and Grahn balanced, that the 'judgment of Paris' was but an offhand decision, compared with the difficulty attending the awarding the palm to any one of the three goddesses in question.

"Nothing can exceed the enthusiasm of the British public, and well they may applaud, for not only is the idea a grand one, but it has been well carried out. Even Charlie P———, the finest of the fine, is seen to tap his spotless gloves together, an effort he never makes, he says, but 'leaves such manifestations to the public'."

MATTHEW HAYGARTH.

The Editor,
Ballet Today
Dear Madam,

Before giving her opinion of the work of four promising young choreographers (*Ballet Today*, February), Miss Janet Sinclair offers a synoptic view of the spate of ballet production in this country since the war. It seems odd, therefore, that she should ignore one established English choreographer who in the past four years has produced five new ballets in this country, as well as two in Australia.

Whatever Miss Sinclair's opinion may be of the work of Walter Gore, (and we each assess differently our leading choreographers), it is surely obscurantist to suppress the fact that it has been done.

Yours truly,

LIONEL BRADLEY.

MISS SINCLAIR COMMENTS:

In selecting those choreographers to mention in my preliminary remarks, I wished to include those whose work has been seen consistently in London during the period reviewed; or those, such as Tudor, whose works seemed likely to introduce a new trend into present-day ballet.

Mr. Bradley, with his infallible eye for detail, points out that I omitted mention of Walter Gore, and I am sorry he considers my simple omission to be the deliberate suppression of an obscurantist. However, as Mr. Bradley no doubt noticed, Mr. Gore is in good company as I did not mention Balanchine, Taras, Carter, Dollar, Andes and others either.

Morley College Lectures

"THE Story of Ballet" is the subject for the summ term public lectures at Morley College. T course of six lectures will be given by Mr. A. V. Cot on Tuesdays at 6.30 p.m. beginning on April 25th.

The syllabus covers : the beginnings of dance as art (with reference to anatomy, mime and gestu choreography, costume and music) ; folk, social a court dancing in Europe up to the Renaissanc France and Italy, the English Masque, and dancers a dancing masters of the 17th and 18th centuries ; t Russian picture ; Ballet in Europe in the 19th centur 1900-1929 : the rise of the New Ballet, Mode Dance, and the influence of the Russian Balle 1929-1949 : English and European Ballet, t American scene, ballet in films and television.

Mr. Coton will illustrate his lectures with pictur panels, blackboard illustrations and gramophone, a there will be opportunities for questions and discussio The fee for the course is 5s.

Full particulars can be obtained from the Secretar Morely College, 61, Westminster Bridge Road, S.E.

Jose Limon to Appear in Pari

Jose Limon, universally recognised as the greate male dancer in the American Dance field, will appe in Europe for the first time in mid-May at the Theat des Champs-Elysees. He will appear in two of h own works *La Malinche* and *The Moor's Pavann* and in Doris Humphrey's *Story of Mankind.* Jo Limon will appear in joint concert with Ruth Pag and other artists will be Pauline Koner and Bentle Stone. The Page-Stone company will be seen i *The Bells, Frankie and Johnny* and *Billy Sunda* There will be a supporting company of twenty dancer

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Markova-Dolin Tour

Alicia Markova and Anton Dolin who are no touring the provinces with a company of thirt dancers will be in the following towns on the date given:—

April 17th	Pavilion, Bournemouth.
April 24th	New Theatre, Oxford.
May 1st	Globe Theatre, Stockton-on-Tees.
May 15th	Empire Theatre, Liverpool.
May 22nd	Grand Theatre, Leeds.
May 29th	Hippodrome, Coventry.
June 5th	Opera House, Manchester.

Ram Gopal

Ram Gopal gave a Lecture Demonstration of India Classical Dancing at the Watergate Theatre, Bucking ham Street, London, during the week commencin April 17th.

Aurel Milloss in London

Aurel Milloss was recently in London for a few days on his return from South America to Italy. While here he chose four girls from Madame Vera Volkova's School to dance in the ballets he is arranging for the Venice Festival.

Vaslav Nijinsky

Madame Nijinsky wishes to thank the many unknown friends who sent anonymous gifts of flowers in remembrance of her husband.

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